

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A chest protector for absorbing impacts to the body of an athlete
5 from a projectile, comprising a main portion for substantially overlying the chest
and abdomen of the athlete, said main portion defining an upper portion and a
lower portion,

said main portion having a variable thickness ranging from a thicker said
upper portion and a thinner said lower portion such that said lower portion is more
10 flexible than said upper portion.

2. The chest protector of Claim 1 wherein said main portion
comprises a plurality of substantially channel-shaped fold lines intersecting with
one another to define a plurality of raised impact-absorbing surfaces
15 therebetween.

3. The chest protector of Claim 2 wherein said raised impact-
absorbing surfaces have a surface area configured for receiving the impact of the
projectile, said surface areas of said plurality of raised impact-absorbing surfaces
20 incrementally decreasing in size from an upper portion of said main portion to
lower portion of said main portion.

4. The chest protector of Claim 2 wherein said raised impact-absorbing surfaces have a surface area configured for receiving the impact of the projectile, said surface areas of said plurality of raised impact-absorbing surfaces incrementally decreasing in size laterally from a center area of said main portion to vertical side edges of said main portion.

5. The chest protector of Claim 4 wherein said surface areas of a plurality of said raised impact-absorbing surfaces include a downward-deflecting surface for directing the projectile downward when said chest protector is impacted by the projectile.

6. The chest protector of Claim 4 wherein each said raised impact-absorbing surface is defined by an upper surface portion and a lower surface portion, said upper surface portion having a greater height relative to said lower surface portion, and said upper surface portion and said lower surface portion merging into one another to define a downward-deflecting surface therebetween, said downward-deflecting surface angled relative said upper and lower portions to direct the projectile downward when the projectile impacts said raised impact-absorbing areas.